



Inside Congress

by United States Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr.

For the week ending September 20, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

SPOKANE ELECTRIC CAR SHOWS OFF AT CAPITOL

This week I hosted an electric car company based in Spokane at the Capitol to demonstrate the "Tango," a commuter car that's narrower than a Honda Goldwing motorcycle, and accelerates faster than a Dodge Viper.

The Tango represents a 21st century solution to many transportation problems: congestion, parking scarcity and pollution. I wanted to show other members of Congress the potential that such a vehicle could have to transform commuting for urban and suburban drivers.

The Tango is designed to meet the commuting needs of congested urban areas. The all-electric vehicle is narrower than a Honda Goldwing motorcycle, creating a possibility to easily double traffic capacity on highways by "lane-splitting," or allowing two Tango vehicles to share a single lane. The Tango's 8-foot 5-inch length and 39-inch width also allow a dramatic increase in parking capacity; four Tangos can park perpendicular in a single standard parking space. Despite its small size, the one to two-person vehicle is designed to be extremely safe. The chassis includes an all-around roll cage that meets or exceeds the safety standards of two major racing sanctioning bodies, the SCCA and HNRA. In addition, the protective roll cage is constructed of steel tubing that meets NASCAR standards. And the vehicle is faster than a Dodge Viper, going from 0 to 60 mph in four seconds, and taking the standing quarter-mile in 12 seconds, exceeding 130 mph.

You can see a picture of the Tango at the Capitol at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer at http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/business/87798_tinycar20.shtml.

LIVESTOCK DISASTER ASSISTANCE WILL HELP WASHINGTON RANCHERS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced yesterday that \$752 million is being made available for a new program to help ranchers who received primary drought disaster designations in 2001 and 2002. The Livestock Compensation Program will provide immediate assistance to the cattle, sheep and buffalo producers who need it

most. Signup will begin Oct. 1 with payments made soon after. Ranchers in nine counties in Washington State are eligible for aid according to the Washington State FSA. These counties include: Okanogan, Stevens, Ferry, Asotin, Benton, Klickitat, Douglas, Yakima and Lincoln. Adams County is expected to be added to the list soon. Look for more information in my update next week about how to apply for aid.

SPOKANE COUNTY BUSINESSES ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

The Treasury Department announced this week that Spokane County businesses will continue to be eligible for participation in the Community Adjustment and Investment Program through August 2003. The county is eligible because of job losses related to the North American Free Trade Agreement. CAIP offers loans and grants focused on creating new private-sector jobs or preserving existing jobs at risk of being lost. You can read more about this assistance at www.nadbank-caip.org.

ON THE FLOOR

Here is a recap of the legislative activity for the week:

H.R. 1701, Consumer Rental Purchase Agreement Act. The bill passed by a vote of 215-201. I voted yes.

H.R. 1701 sets a "federal floor" for consumer protection in rental-purchase transactions. Most states currently regulate rental-purchase transactions such as leases, however, the scope and consumer protection requirements of these laws vary significantly by state. H.R. 1701 improves consumer protections in 32 States, while allowing other States to adopt more stringent protections.

Currently, there is no Federal oversight or regulation of the rent-to-own industry. H.R. 1701 amends the Consumer Credit Protection Act (CCPA) to provide such oversight and regulation. It provides meaningful and consistent disclosure of all rental-purchase agreement terms and provides substantive rights to consumers under these agreements. This legislation provides a uniform method of disclosing the cost of the rental-purchase transactions in advertisements, product tags, and rental-purchase agreements; it will fill disclosure gaps that exist in many State laws and provide important substantive consumer protections. It also ensures consistent treatment of the transaction as a lease and not a credit sale.

The House also passed two resolutions calling on the Senate to move forward with reauthorization of welfare reform and to repeal the death tax. The House has already passed both measures.

SCHEDULE

Last weekend I was in the district. I attended the opening of the Davenport Hotel in downtown Spokane. I attended the Washington Air National Guard 50th anniversary dinner. I attended the unveiling of a new stadium scoreboard at Wilbur-Creston in honor of Sgt. Nathan Hayes, who was killed while serving in the War on Terrorism.

I participated in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation walk in Spokane. I attended the Spokane County Fair and viewed WSU Energy Program's Zero Energy Manufactured Home. I attended Bethel AME church.

I spoke to 9th grade students at West Valley High School about national security and Iraq. I met with seniors at Orchard Crest Retirement Community in Spokane to discuss prescription drugs. I met with Lora Rose of Stevens County and other members of the National Beef Cattle Consortium.

This week in Washington, DC, I met with Diane Gasaway of the Washington Rural Electric Co-op Association. I met with American Bus Association member Bill Brannan of Northwestern Stage Lines, which is headquartered in Spokane. I met with American Association for Homecare member Dale Cleveland of Spokane to discuss home health care accessibility. I met with Mike Worthington, Joann Piccolo, Jim Goldstein of Motorola regarding homeland security initiatives.

I test drove the Tango, made by Commuter Cars Corporation of Spokane, around the Capitol and was able to show it to many interested Members of Congress.

I met with Rob Clark, superintendent of the Reardan-Edwall School District. I met with Darby McLean of GenPrime, a local Spokane company, who was in Washington to promote a new homeland security product. I met with Jan Holloway of Washington state, a cancer survivor visiting Washington, DC for American Cancer Society's Celebration on the Hill. I met Bill DeWebber and Patricia Shea of Spokane. I met with Jim Kuntz of the Port of Walla Walla to discuss Highway 12. I met with Skip Dreps of Paralyzed Veterans of America's Northwest Chapter to discuss the VA budget. I met with Steven Toole, Gerhard Letzing and Judy Massong with the Washington State Trial Lawyers Association. I congratulated Carol Mice, who was in Washington, DC to accept the 2002 Green Thumb award.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

I always enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in any matter. Here are some of the ways you may reach me, especially if you know of others who may want to receive this report each week:

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